

AMHERST SCHOOLS

Fiscal Year 2005

Amherst School Committee

Elaine Brighty, Chair
Alisa Brewer, Vice-Chair
Andy Churchill, Secretary
Tom Flittie
Vladimir Morales

The Amherst School Committee is an elected body responsible for the public education of all children in kindergarten through grade six and of pre-school children with substantial special needs in our community. The Committee meets regularly on the third Tuesday of each month and welcomes citizen participation at each meeting. The members of this committee also serve as Amherst's members of the Regional School Committee, which has responsibility for the educational programs for children in grades seven through twelve.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Student enrollment as of October 1, 2004 was:

<u>GRADE</u>	<u>STUDENTS</u>
Pre K	62
K	178
1	210
2	192
3	203
4	208
5	220
6	<u>205</u>
TOTAL	1,478

Enrollments for 2004-2005 were 56 less than the previous year. Eighteen children from Amherst attended other school districts under the School Choice program.

Primary goals for the Amherst Schools are as follows:

1. developing and maintaining an up-to-date, innovative, multicultural, academically challenging curriculum that promotes high standards and success for all students
2. providing creative, multi-faceted instruction that maintains high standards, engages all students, and enables all students to be successful learners
3. making all students feel fully welcome and a part of our schools, regardless of race, class, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, culture, academic success, or physical ability
4. eliminating the achievement gap among students from different racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds
5. addressing the demands and opportunities facing our schools as a result of the rapid growth in the use of technology throughout our society

6. increasing communication and collaboration among the district's stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and the larger community – and using parents and the community more effectively as educational resources
7. hiring and retaining a high quality teaching and administrative staff
8. equipping and maintaining school buildings to provide healthy, accessible, modern learning environments that support the achievement of our mission
9. sustaining a physically and emotionally safe environment in our schools for students and staff.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Principal activities and events during the 2004-2005 school year included the following:

Business Office

- During the 2004-2005 school year, the business office implemented the new windows-based financial software package MUNIS. Training was conducted for all staff.

Curriculum and Assessment

- A new mathematics program, *Investigations*, was implemented district-wide K-6. Extensive professional development in the use of *Investigations* was provided to all elementary teachers by consultant Linda Dodge.
- The first Amherst-Regional School District Annual Report was completed this year. Dr. Carey Dimmitt and Wendy McGannon from the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research at the University of Massachusetts analyzed extensive data from the 2003-2004 school year in preparing the report.
- The pro-social skills curriculum *Second Step* was implemented in the elementary schools.
- Dr. Martha Ntiforo, Executive Director of K-12 Curriculum, retired in June 2005 after 12 years of service to the district.

English Language Learners (ELL)

- A group was formed, in the fall of 2004, to conduct a feasibility study for the implementation of a dual language program. Work on the possibility of providing such a program will continue during the 2005-2006 school year.
- Significant efforts focused on providing English Language Learners (ELL) with a sheltered English immersion instructional program as required by state (referendum Question 2) and federal (No Child Left Behind) regulations. As part of these efforts, (a) bilingual teachers, paraprofessionals, and tutors provided clarification in the student's native language during science, math, and social studies instruction when needed, and ELL teachers provided instruction in English as an additional language (commonly referred to as ESL) to all ELL students; (b) intensive subject matter instruction specific to the learning needs of ELLs was provided for beginning speakers of English, and a lesser amount was provided for intermediate and advanced learners of English; (c) newly required state tests including the MELA-0 and MEPA R/W were administered; and (d) training about the principles and practices of learning English as an additional language was provided for grade level teachers of math, science, and social studies as well as support staff. The trainings were provided by the ELL staff under the direction of Debbie Zacarian, director of the ELL program.

- During 04-05, 203 elementary English Language Learners were enrolled in the ELL program. Of those, 75 enrolled in the language-site specific sheltered English immersion program (Khmer at Fort River, Korean at Mark's Meadow, Mandarin at Wildwood, and Spanish at Crocker Farm), and an additional 28 received bilingual tutorial support. All of the ELL students received ESL instruction. By regulation, once students are no longer English Language Learners and have transferred from the ELL Program, they must be monitored for a period of two years. 30 students were monitored last year as part of this two year-requirement.

Facilities

- It is expected that Fort River and Wildwood Schools will be renovated within the next few years. A comprehensive plan is being developed for each of the schools.
- A new boiler was installed at Mark's Meadow School. The district is working with the University of Massachusetts to upgrade the system controllers.
- A new software program, Workdesk, was implemented in September. The program allows computer tracking work tickets for all facilities. In 2004-2005, more than 1,040 work tickets were completed.
- All schools have a school-based safety plan in place. In 2004-2005, work began on development of a district safety plan and manual. The safety manual will be completed early in the 2005-2006 school year.

Information Systems

- Jeff Comenitz, Information Systems Director, played a leading role in the development of a Regional Data Warehouse for schools in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. Once implemented, the data warehouse will allow member districts to accurately "mine" historical data to positively influence decisions on improving student achievement.
- In 2004-2005, the district student information management system, WinSchool, was retired and replaced with PowerSchool. The new program has teacher grading and attendance features and superior reporting capabilities. Training in the use of PowerSchool was provided for faculty and staff throughout the year.

Human Resources/Personnel

- Contract negotiations with the Amherst-Pelham Education Association (teachers, paraprofessional, clerical) and with AFSCME (maintenance, drivers, custodial) were finalized during the year. The current contract covers the period from 7/1/04 through 6/30/06, with salary increases of 1.5%, 2.5%, and 3.5% over the three-year contract period. Additional language in each of the contracts calls for a review and update of job descriptions, as well as a review of the evaluation process and evaluation method. The teachers' contract includes creation of a study group to research performance pay and to establish a joint advisory board on professional development.
- A Human Resources Department was formalized in the district during 2004-2005 which consolidated personnel functions to ensure compliance with state and federal guidelines and statutes. The Department is responsible for posting and advertising vacancies, issuance of all employee contracts, benefits administration, and unemployment and workmen's compensation. Additionally, the Department oversees recruitment and retention efforts of the district.

- After a national search, Mark Prince was appointed Principal of Wildwood School. Karen Lowe will return to her position as Assistant Principal in the 2005-2006 school year.

Program Development and Community Connections

- Wendy Kohler, Executive Director for Program Development, worked with alumni in establishing an Amherst Alumni Association. During 2004-2005, AAEEA grant funding was secured to support summer work on the association; an Alumni Association website was established; a mailing was sent to 1,500 local alums; and publicity initiatives began. The official “kick-off” of the Alumni Association will be at the 2005 Thanksgiving football game.
- The “Amherst College Connection” between Amherst College and the Amherst public schools was formalized in 2004-2005. Initiatives completed in 2004-2005 included: securing 35 volunteers for the 2005-2006 school year through a collaboration between the Amherst College student group TEACH and the High School Mentor program; collaborating on a joint faculty study group to begin work in 2005-2006; and jumpstarting the Pipeline Project.
- Superintendent Hochman conducted a second “World Café” event in February 2005. Funded through National Evaluation Systems, the purpose of the event was to continue the work of bringing together school and community members interested in equity and social justice issues to assist the district in bringing more focus to the Becoming A Multicultural School System initiative.
- Students in every school and at all grade levels participated in fundraising efforts to support tsunami relief efforts.

Student Services

- A program was implemented to get every parent/guardian into the schools by October 15th each year. During 2004-2005, grades K-7 achieved 100% success with that goal.
- A PRISM model for discipline – Prevention, Response, Intervention, Support and Monitoring – was designed in 2004-2005 with significant input from the community. The new discipline guidelines are designed to ensure consistency across all schools and grade levels and will be implemented beginning with the 2005-2006 school year.